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The Hidden Springs and Currents
of Mental Life

BY

Professor L. R. GEISSLER, Ph. D.

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The Hidden Springs and Currents of Mental Life.*

By PROFESSOR L. R. GEISSLER, PH. D.

When speaking of the "stream of mental life" psychologists usually have reference to the transitory nature of our conscious experiences, comparing them to the waves and ripples on the surface of the water. But there is a much deeper and more fruitful way in which mental life may be compared to a stream that springs from a hillside, winds its way through fertile valleys, and finally joins its waters to the fathomless ocean, a comparison which enables us not only to invoke many close and suggestive analogies, but also to gain a synthetic view of the whole of human life and to come to a clearer and fuller understanding of some of its baffling intricacies.

Where, for example, is the real beginning of the stream? Certainly not where its cool, clear waters for the first time reflect the rays of light, but hidden deep in the dark crevices of the mountain side where drops meet drops and, following the law of gravity, trickle down their devious paths until they have gathered enough mass and force to break through the earthen crust. In like manner the first beginning of the stream of mental life is forever hidden from our view. Biology leads us to assume that both, ova and spermatozoa, are endowed with original vital energy or force or whatever it may be called, but that is not equivalent to what is meant by "mental life." Does it then begin with the process of fertilization? Or does it not appear until the first signs of neural tissue are traceable in the embryo? Or is it dormant until a still later stage, when the first independent movements are observable? It seems almost certain that some sort of mental life is present *before* birth, if we do not limit the term "mental life" to more or less clear and itemized consciousness.

*Incorporating parts of a paper read before the Woman's Club of Lynchburg, Va.

In order to understand the fuller significance of the term "mental life" we shall again employ the analogy of the stream and refer to its three parts, namely its bed, its currents of flowing water, and the invisible, but none the less real and constantly rising and spreading vapors of humidity. These three parts correspond to the three aspects of mental life, namely the nervous system, the subconscious tendencies and dispositions, and consciousness.

The bed of the stream of mental life is the whole nervous system, including the spinal cord and the brain as well as the numberless microscopically small ramifications of nerve-fibres found in all parts of the human body. These anatomical structures are readily observed and measured with delicate scientific instruments and their locations mapped out, just as geographical explorers locate new rivers on the maps. The analogy may be carried still further; just as the river-bed is now wide and shallow, now deep and narrow, here smooth and sandy, there rough and rocky, here fixed and deeply worn by a constant flow of water, there changing and shifting as the passing currents, usually sluggish and shallow, are suddenly swelled to swift and overflowing torrents, just so the nervous system in some of its parts consists of nerve-paths so deeply carved by the mysteriously working forces of heredity as to offer no resistance to the first nerve-currents that sweep over them; just so, in other parts, the intra-neural resistance seems so great as to divert the currents over several simultaneous paths, until one of them, by frequent repetition, becomes more deeply worn and thus forms the basis of some mental habit. Again, just as the topographical course of the river-bed depends very largely upon the geological formations through which it passes, so the nervous system is influenced by many factors external to it, as nutrition, bodily growth and decay, periods of rest and fatigue, and even poisonous substances introduced into the human body. It is possible to study the river-bed, after the water-currents have been drained into different channels or the spring itself has dried up; likewise the anatomist can examine the nervous tissues after death, when all mental life has ceased.

It is even possible to submit individual drops of water, taken from the running stream, to microscopical and chemical analysis; but no such methods will avail to study the currents of water themselves, nor is it possible to discover subconscious tendencies and dispositions by experiments in bio-chemistry or psychophysics or even by mental tests. We need instead new methods and sounding instruments of an entirely different kind. To deny the existence of these subconscious nervous currents would be as absurd as to deny the presence of the various currents of water familiar to every boy who has learnt to swim and dive in the river. If it were possible to make visible the different water-currents, perhaps by coloring them in various ways, they would present a kaleidoscopic picture at once surprising and interesting. Some currents would be seen to flow swiftly along the bottom, perhaps diverted now and then to the right or left or upward by large, obstructing rocks, perhaps increased and enforced here and there by springs rising in the river-bed. Other currents might follow more slowly the windings of the river-bank, now forming pools of standing water, now edged on to swifter movement and exhausting their energy in whirling and wildly foaming eddies. Other currents again run along the surface of the water, easily impressed by all kinds of outside influences, as winds and rain and light and heat or falling and floating objects. There may be still other currents farther below the surface, depending partly upon the length, width, and depth of the river-bed and partly upon artificial obstructions in the general course of the river placed there either by nature or by human skill in its efforts to utilize the forces of the flow.

Infinitely more complex and varied than this play of the currents in the river are the movements of the nervous undercurrents in the stream of mental life. Before, however, undertaking to describe the latest psychological method of studying them and to present the Freudian theory of psycho-analysis resulting from it, a few words must be said about the third aspect of mental life, consciousness, which corresponds to the vapors of humidity beginning to arise from the surface of the stream after it has come to the light of day, just as consciousness does not ap-

pear until after birth. Until very recently, consciousness has been the chief object of psychological study and investigation and has been subdivided in various ways. Some authors have distinguished within it the intellectual, moral, and æsthetic spheres, others speak of feelings, will, and reason, while still others divide it into mental and spiritual life. One of the reasons why consciousness should have absorbed so much of the human effort to fathom the depths of human nature is the comparative ease of observing it by the method of "introspection" or "self-observation." "Know thyself" was one of Socrates' first maxims, as he wandered through the streets of Athens, more than four hundred years before Christ, discussing and debating with anyone who would listen and reply, the deepest problems of human knowledge. How this self-knowledge was to be attained, Socrates illustrated by his own method and procedure, which he called "the method of intellectual midwifery." It consists chiefly in asking yourself "searching questions," submitting the answers to sharp criticisms and analysis, and drawing valid inferences and conclusions from the verified facts obtained by self-observation. For twenty-three hundred years this method had been applied more or less rigorously by philosophers and psychologists of various nations to the third aspect of mental life. Not until the middle of the last century was the problem extended to the subconscious layers of the human mind; the pioneers in this effort were several French psychologists, as Dr. Charcot of the Saltpetriere and Drs. Bernheim and Liebault of Nancy. Their chief method of studying the subconscious currents of mental life was that of hypnotism, and they succeeded in treating many cases of hysteria and simpler mental aberrations. Their success attracted a great many medical students from all over Europe, and amongst them was a young physician from Vienna, Dr. Sigmund Freud, who later was to become the author of the psycho-analytic method and theory.

When Freud returned to Austria about 1880, an older friend and colleague of his, Dr. E. Breuer, related to him the history of a peculiar case of hysteria that had come to him for treatment, which ran as follows:

About twelve years ago the patient, then a little Austrian girl, had a very distressing experience. She had an English governess whom she disliked and whose little lap-dog she despised. One day the girl entered the room of the governess and found the little dog on a table drinking water from a tumbler. The girl was horrified, stood motionless for a moment, and then left the room not saying a word about this event to anybody; in fact, she soon forgot it. A few years later her mother died and she kept house for her father, whom she dearly loved. The father later became seriously ill, and she nursed him day and night, but he finally died when she was about twenty years old. One day during the last few weeks of his sickness, as she was sitting at his bedside, with tears in her eyes, he suddenly asked her what time it was. She tried to suppress her tears which blinded her and to conceal them from him, and for that purpose she raised the watch so close to her eyes that the dial appeared very large and distorted. At another occasion, one night while waiting for the surgeon who was coming from Vienna to operate on her father, she fell asleep from exhaustion, her arm hanging over the back of the chair. She had a dream that a black snake came out of the wall and crept toward the bed. She tried to frighten the snake away, but as the arm had gone asleep she could not move it, and looking at her fingers she saw them transformed into little snakes. She was terrified, awoke and tried to pray, but could utter only a few English sentences which were scraps of old nursery rhymes. From that moment she had lost her mother-tongue and could think and speak only in English. At the same time other symptoms of hysteria developed, such as a severe paralysis of the right arm, strabism or disturbance of eye-movements, a loss of power to drink water, complete loss of speech or aphasia, and temporary "states of absence." Soon afterwards her father died and she was committed to the home of the family physician, Dr. Breuer, for observation and treatment. He diagnosed her case as an advanced stage of hysteria and tried hypnotic treatment, but without success. However, he noticed that in her states of absence she mumbled strange, disconnected words to herself. He made a careful and complete list of them and

tried to have her explain them during her normal states. This gradually led her to relate, at first piece-meal and with many gaps and hesitations, the various events of her past life that have just been enumerated. With this help and constant encouragement she reconstructed these past experiences from memory one by one and felt very much relieved by it, until finally her hysteric symptoms failed to recur and she was completely cured.

Dr. Breuer did not realize at first the full significance of his treatment, which his patient had called the "talking cure," but in co-operation with Dr. Freud the method was applied to other cases and refined and its underlying principles worked out to some extent. Briefly stated they are the following: Hysteria and similar temporary mental disorders may be cured by guiding the patient's attention to the scenes during which the morbid symptoms had made their first appearance, by living these scenes over again in a state of high emotional tension leading to a natural expression of the re-instated earlier emotion which had been suppressed and usually completely forgotten, but which had worked subconsciously and had caused the morbid symptoms. Let us illustrate these principles with the case of the little Austrian girl, in order to emphasize their significance.

Recall first, then, her sight of the despised dog drinking from a tumbler. She suppressed her emotional disgust, perhaps because of some conventional regard for others. This emotional experience, although seemingly forgotten, found a subconscious outlet, at a time when she was physically and mentally exhausted, in the inability to drink water. When this memory was re-instated and allowed to express itself in a natural way, the inability disappeared, because there was no further need for a subconscious outlet. It was similar with all her other symptoms. The difficulty consists in calling the patient's attention to these forgotten experiences; with this particular patient the clues to these forgotten experiences or "emotional complexes" were furnished by her mumbled words, which were used as the basis for her efforts to recall the suppressed emotions, they were the keys to her subconscious tendencies. For several years Breuer and Freud collaborated and searched for new ways of tapping the

subconscious in order to remove thereby the disturbing causes of the morbid symptoms. These efforts meant a constant sounding of a person's past experiences, either by the talking cure, or by association reactions, or by telling of dreams, or watching for one's errors and slips of the tongue and pen, and even in one's witticisms. In these studies of a person's past mental life Freud believed to have discovered that sexual elements played an enormously important role, although in this Breuer could not agree with him, and the two finally separated.

From now on Freud's work can be viewed partly as a search for sources or approaches to the subconscious tendencies and partly as a search for the fundamental laws which underlie their hidden activities. Of these two problems the latter is perhaps the more important. In both attempts Freud has been ably supported by other students of human nature, not only in his own country, but everywhere, and especially among psychiatrists and physicians in the United States. Among the leaders of this whole psycho-analytic movement we may mention C. G. Jung in Zurich, S. Ferenczi in Budapest, E. E. Jones in Toronto, A. Adler and S. E. Jelliffe in New York, G. S. Hall of Clark University, Morton Prince and J. J. Putnam of Harvard, and E. J. Kempf and W. A. White of Washington. To be sure, many of these disciples do not agree with the master in every respect, but the differences are not usually matters of fact but questions of interpretation of the facts. Instead of trying to disentangle their various views, I shall confine myself as closely as possible to Freud's own views, digressing only where other authors have made important additions or given fuller explanations of certain phenomena.

According to Freud our whole conscious life is shot through and through with manifestations of the subconscious, if we are only willing to search for them. Freud himself has made his most detailed studies along four lines, namely dreams, wit, slips of the tongue and pen, and other erroneous actions of everyday life. His most brilliant disciple, C. G. Jung, has added to this the only experimental method used by psycho-analysts, namely the method of free associations and association-reactions, while other disciples have subjected artistic productions and especially

literary works to psycho-analytical examinations and interpretations.

There is one great difficulty with all attempts to fathom and understand the subconscious springs and currents, that is, they all depend upon our own way of interpreting certain events of our conscious life; thus all the psycho-analytic methods involve much more interpretation than observation. If one is willing to accept Freud's interpretations of our dreams or of our slips of the tongue and of the pen or of our other errors, or if one agrees with Jung's interpretation of the association-reaction experiments or with the interpretations of art and literature by other psycho-analysts, then the subconscious will appear as the source and main spring of his whole mental life. It has been likened to the ice-berg which proceeds on its voyage regardless of the direction of the wind. Most of the ice-berg is hidden under the surface, and it is by powerful currents, invisible to the casual observer, that the mass of floating ice is driven irresistibly towards its goal. However, it seems that Freud's interpretations are largely influenced by his pre-conceived notions and ideas about the subconscious, and once having formulated his theory of the nature of the subconscious, it is not difficult to make all his interpretations conform with his theory. On the other hand, it must not be understood that his theory is without a factual basis. Indeed, many of his crucial conceptions about the subconscious Freud has derived from a comparative study and detailed analysis of hundreds, perhaps even thousands of dreams, which he regards as the royal road to a knowledge of the subconscious; dreams, he says, are the language or symbols of the subconscious, but as this language needs translation into the terms of the conscious, Freud has devoted his greatest efforts to this task, and we will be able to present and understand his system more readily if we begin with his theory of dreams.

The first thing to be realized about dreams, according to Freud, is that the dream as merely remembered in the morning does not say what it means or mean what it says. The dream as remembered is only the *manifest content* which is very different from the underlying subconscious thoughts of the dreamer which con-

stitute the *latent content*. The manifest content is illogical, confused, fragmentary, and distorted, while the latent content is orderly, connected, logical, and complete; but it has disguised itself and become unrecognizable in order not to disturb the dreamer's sleep. As Freud says, our dreams are censored before they are permitted to see the light of consciousness. Who the censor is we shall learn later. The disguising of the latent dream thoughts involves four different kinds of processes or hidden currents: condensation, displacement, dramatisation, and secondary elaboration, which we must study a little more in detail.

First, *condensation*. Most of our dreams are very short, they last a few seconds only. Nevertheless they give us the impression of having taken a long time because of this element of condensation. This is accomplished, for instance, by fusing the parts of widely separated localities into a single scene, so that we believe we have been in all these different localities one after another, instead of having seen them in a single picture. In a like manner events of different periods are amalgamated into one event by adding together the essential parts of each. Sometimes elements from different persons are fused into a single individual, a sort of compound photograph containing, for example, the face of one, the body of another, the walk of a third, and the like; even the two sexes may thus be mixed up, and real persons are combined with parts of photographs of other people. Another kind of condensation is that of words, names or puns. For example, one man dreamed he saw on the table a book with the title "Bragmatism" and under it the name of a friend who was writing a book on Pragmatism and was bragging about it. The substitution of the B for the P expressed the dreamer's real attitude toward his friend which he was too polite to manifest in waking life.

Second, *displacement*. This is one of the chief means of producing distortions and disfigurement. It enables the Censor to change important subconscious thoughts into something insignificant, or to conceal the true cause or meaning of the dream. For example, a young physician of very moderate means dreamt

that he had made out his income tax and that the tax-commissioner had contested it as too low, thus concealing the dreamer's subconscious wish that he were a famous physician of large income. The most extensive form of displacement, according to Freud, occurs in connection with the sexual elements; here the symbols of the dream language are very elaborate and complex.

Third, *dramatization*. It is a well-known fact that the dreamer is usually an actor in his own dreams, he hardly ever plays the role of a passive onlooker only. Sometimes a person may see himself as a participant in the scenes before his own eyes. The actions themselves are of the most phantastic and often impossible kind, as floating down the stairs without touching the steps, or skating on the open river, and they come more or less in single file series, that is, one thing at a time quickly shifting to something else. Further illustrations seem superfluous.

Fourth, *secondary elaboration*. This process includes really a number of miscellaneous transformations that cannot be classified under the previous items. It also represents more the mechanism of the subconscious thoughts rather than the thoughts themselves; it therefore enters also in the conscious process of reconstructing the dream in waking life. Frequently it tries to make sense and connection between disconnected fragments of the manifest content, or it tries to justify the dream in the eyes of the dreamer. Sometimes it makes use of the dream within the dream, as when a dreamer says to himself in sleep: "Why, it's all a dream." Secondary elaboration is also present in the transformation of such external stimuli as may have initiated the dream, for example, a noise, or a flash of light, or a draft of cool air, etc.; these elements are usually incorporated into the dreams after first having been changed so as to fit into the whole setting.

Perhaps the most important and most frequent form of secondary elaboration occurs in the use of symbols in dreams. This appeal to symbolism in dreams is perhaps the most objectionable feature in Freud's whole system, and he seems to sense the difficulty and anticipate objections by an elaborate argument in

justification of their use and usefulness. He says, for instance, that we use symbols in our daily life all the time, frequently without even knowing their meaning, or rather, the meaning has been lost or forgotten by intervening generations; for example, how many people know the real meaning of the Christmas tree or of the custom of throwing rice and old shoes at the departing bride and groom? Our language itself is full of symbols and metaphors; many of them refer to parts of the human body, for instance, the mouth of rivers, the lap or the bosom or the bowels of the earth, the head of the lake, a neck of land, the eyes in the potatoes. Religion also makes use of many symbols, as the cross, the triangle, the snake biting its tail. Again we use symbols when we wish to simplify something difficult to understand, as logical or mathematical relations. The symbol always tries to compare the unknown to something known, as when the Indians of Central America compared the horses of the Spaniards which they had never seen before, to giant pigs, the pig being the one animal most like a horse which they knew. Thinking in symbols is therefore a more primitive, infantile, archaic or inferior kind of thinking. The subconscious tendencies, which Freud believes to be much older in animal life than the conscious experiences, may therefore continue to use some of the archaic symbols which consciousness has long forgotten. Brevity forbids us to give a list of the various kinds of symbols occurring in dreams. Furthermore, symbols are not absolutely universal, they may be modified by the individual's past experiences; therefore it is often necessary to work out the meaning of certain symbols for each individual on the basis of several dreams. However, a few common symbols may be given here for the sake of illustration: the human body is represented in dreams by such things as a building, a cabin, a house or a church; while curtains, draperies, hangings, and the like mean the amount of clothes worn; the person of the father is symbolized by dreaming of an emperor, king, governor, mayor or some similar authority, while the mother is indicated by empress, queen, a ship, a tree, or a fountain; birth is meant by falling into water, retrieving objects from lakes, or swimming; death is represented

by travelling by rail or boat and by vanishing; horses and dogs symbolize sexual union; grains stand for fecundity; colors, precious stones, metals, flowers and numbers have the same symbolic meanings in dreams that is ascribed to them in waking life.

The four processes which we have discussed thus far operate, it is to be remembered, with the manifest dream contents, in order to conceal real dream thoughts or the latent dream content. What, then, is the real meaning of our dreams? What are these concealed and disguised dream thoughts? The answer can be given in a few words: a dream is the subconscious and disguised fulfilment of a repressed wish, it is the satisfaction or expression of a subconscious disposition or tendency that for one reason or another is not allowed to work itself out or come to the light of consciousness. This is the central point of Freud's theory of dreams and it is so novel and seems so far-fetched that it has given rise to endless discussions and controversies which the author of the theory has tried to meet by the following lines of evidence and arguments.

Some dreams, he says, are obviously wish-fulfilments, like the following example taken from the book of the Northpole explorer Nordenskjöld and recorded while he and his men were marooned in a Polar wilderness, living on preserves and daily straining their eyes to catch sight of a passing sail. The men dreamt of attending dinner parties where course after course was served, of the mailman bringing bags of mail, of mountains of tobacco, and of ships approaching under full sail. Or take some of the dreams told in the Old Testament: Jacob's dream of the ladder and the promised relief, or Joseph's dream of the twelve sheaves of wheat and then of the sun, moon and eleven stars bowing before him. Again, Freud points out, the dreams of children are quite frequently obvious wish-fulfilments, because children do not repress their thoughts as much as adults who are much more bound by conventionalities, costumes, and ethical principles. How much the wish itself enters even the conscious life of childhood may be seen from the appeal that fairy tales have for children; take the case of Aladdin's wonderful lamp, or the fairy godmother in Cinderella, or the magic wand, and other examples.

The childhood of the individual and the childhood of the whole human race are essentially alike in this respect as in many others.

But in order to trace the wish-element and its disguised fulfilment in most of the dreams of adult individuals, Freud has to resort to elaborate interpretations by means of the four subconscious mechanisms mentioned before and by making a number of other hypotheses, such as the following:

1. It is not necessary that the wish should be present now; it is sufficient if it existed, even temporarily only, at some remotely early period of the individual's life, especially in early childhood.

2. All the dreams of one night, when considered with respect to their latent content, are simply parts of one unit; their separation into several portions and their grouping may have a special meaning of its own.

3. In trying to fulfil a secret or suppressed wish, the subconscious is constantly hampered by what Freud calls the Censor, which distorts the dream thoughts.

4. The Censor being unable to prevent the wish from being fulfilled in the dream, transforms the wish and its satisfaction into symbols which are not understood by the consciousness of the dreamer.

5. The reason why we forget our dreams and sometimes imagine that we never dream is probably the same reason which causes us to forget the unpleasant events of our conscious life. Sometimes, however, the Censor suppresses our memory of dreams. The disconnected character of dreams resembles the rambling talk of delirious patients whose words are also disconnected; but a knowledge of the history of such a patient enables the doctor to fill in the gaps.

6. It must be remembered that in our normal waking state wishes or desires or cravings have often a prominent part; therefore it is not surprising to find wishes enter into our dreams, because many other experiences, especially those of the day preceding the dream, also enter into our dreams and we do not find anything unusual in this fact. Indeed, whenever we do any-

thing with a purpose or an end in view, we are really anticipating its completion or fulfilment. The term "wish" should be used then in the broader sense of denoting all kinds of desires, hopes, strivings, or ambitions. If such wishes cannot be fulfilled in waking life, perhaps because of insurmountable physical obstacles, or because of mental obstructions, such as social conventionalities or moral considerations and the like, they will find a subconscious outlet or satisfaction in dreams. But if this is successfully prevented by the Censor, then the subconscious tendencies will not rest, but try to come to consciousness in some other forms, as errors of the tongue or pen, or other erroneous actions, and finally even as morbid symptoms of hysteria and similar temporary mental disturbances.

In this connection it becomes necessary to explain what Freud means by the censorship which he says works subconsciously in everybody. In attempting this explanation it is advisable to go somewhat beyond Freud's own theory, which in this respect is not very satisfactory, and refer to supplements added by some of his disciples.

Corresponding to the force of gravity which makes the river find its way toward the low shores of the ocean, there seems to be some force operating in man which we might call with Bergson the "elan vital" or "vital urge," or with Bernard Shaw the "vital force," or with Schopenhauer the "will to live," because it is a subconscious striving or impulse to persist, an instinctive tendency to self-preservation. This force operates in three directions: 1. In order to live man must be fed, and hence we may speak of a "*nutrition urge*"; 2. Man is impelled by this vital force to perpetuate his species, and this may be called the "*sex urge*"; and 3. Man must avoid encounters with harmful stimuli, and this has been called the "*safety urge*."

The normal satisfaction of these three urges is accompanied by a conscious state of pleasantness or at least of well-being, while their denial arouses the feeling of displeasure and discomfort. The nutrition urge, present in all animals, became highly developed in man, awakening a desire to control his environment from which he derived his food-supply. Thus man developed

a "will-to-power" which has become the source of all egotism and of the strivings for higher self-realization, in fact, the ultimate cause of his progress to higher stages of civilization. At present, with the comparative ease of food-getting in our modern civilization, the nutrition urge might be called more appropriately the power urge or the ego urge; however, the slightest cause endangering the food-supply of individuals or of whole nations will almost instantly reveal the close relation between the archaic form of the nutrition urge and the modern form of the power urge, as has been amply illustrated in the late war. The sex urge has been called by Freud the "libido"; but again it must be kept in mind that Freud uses the term sex in a much wider sense, including under it, for instance, all functions of excretion as well as various secondary activities.

The safety urge is so vitally important that whenever it appears to be deficient in an individual, that individual is taken in hand by the social group of which he is a member, and he is either restrained by appointed guardians or he is lodged in some institution, and he loses all legal responsibility for his conduct. The only time in our life when all these urges are perfectly satisfied is before birth, when the mother's body supplies all wants and gives complete protection. Soon after birth environment will produce restrictions after restrictions. The urges now may come to consciousness in the form of wishes and desires, and at first they are very simple and readily complied with. But as the child grows older, its wishes and desires come into conflict with those of other human beings and now some wishes have to be modified or else they cannot be fulfilled at all, and repression begins. These repressions are the more painful the more the child had at first been humored by its parents. The child discovers that a good many things the baby is allowed to do or have the child no longer is allowed. Thus one of the great tasks of childhood is the repression of all the elements which are either useless or harmful or undesirable from the point of view of its social group. Hence a little girl, when a stranger asked her what her mother called her, innocently replied: "Henrietta Don't-do-that," and another mother had developed the habit

of calling, whenever the noise of her children at play in the adjoining room became subdued, "Johnnie, stop your nonsense."

The successful suppression of these undesirable desires, especially of the sex urge and the ego urge frequently protect the individual from harmful consequences; thus suppression plays into the hands of the safety urge. The latter acts at first blindly, instinctively, subconsciously; but in the course of time it adopts the means of successful suppression for its own ends and thus develops into the Censor that constantly guards us against all those tendencies and impulses which, if satisfied, would decrease our food-supply, or risk our physical safety, or injure our will-to-power, or endanger our social standing, or lower our sense of superiority, or hurt us in any way whatever. In other words, the safety urge comes into conflict with the sex urge and the ego urge, and often the struggle between them is very painful. During sleep, especially, the safety urge is least powerful, so that now the other two often may gain the upper hand. Under such conditions the safety urge, while it cannot entirely prevent the other urges from manifesting and satisfying themselves, will do its best to disguise these manifestations to such an extent as to make them unintelligible to our subsequent conscious or waking states, thus protecting the individual against himself, at least against his lower self. Most of these subconscious subterfuges of the safety urge are developed during childhood and adolescence, and in adult life they experience alteration or additions only when the individual removes to some entirely new environment which offers absolutely novel problems and situations. The normal individual, under such conditions, submits at least in appearance to the new rules restricting his individual freedom, and he seeks *compensation* for his repressions in other ways which are either in conformity with his new social environment or else are otherwise harmless.

Compensation is therefore another important aspect of Freud's theory. The form of compensation which an individual will seek depends upon the type of person to which he belongs. The process of repression has produced two types of human beings, according to Freud, the introverted and the extroverted type.

The former is a person who views the world from within and considers always the effect it has upon him. The extroverted type of individual is one whose interests flow outward and attach themselves to objects and events in the outer world of reality. In a sense we may therefore think of dreams as a kind of compensation for the repressions of the urges during our waking conscious states; at least in our dream thoughts we know no limitations, our freedom is absolute, and customs and ethics do not bother us in our latent dream contents. It is only when the latent contents try to enter consciousness that the safety urge exercises its censorship in the various ways which we have briefly sketched.

A few words may now be added about some of the other forms in which the subconscious tendencies, in particular the sex urge and the power or ego urge, try to find satisfaction in conscious expressions, although even so only in a disguised way, because of the influence of the safety urge which is still exercising its censorship. Among these forms Freud has made a special study of wit and of the various errors of everyday life.

Wit, according to Freud, is not voluntarily and constantly at our command. No one can sit down and write jokes by the hour, as he would do in composing an essay or writing letters. Nor can we always recall at will a series of jokes, when we would need them for the sake of joviality. However, a syllable, a sound, a gesture, a peal of laughter or the like may suddenly conjure up to our memory a funny story, a "that-reminds-me" anecdote, or some witty saying. According to Freud there is a remarkable parallelism between dreams and wit, in that both show the processes of condensation and displacement. For example, when King Leopold of Belgium became attentive to the French dancer Cleo, he was nicknamed "Cleopold"; De Quincey speaks of old age, because of its fondness for telling anecdotes, as "anecdotalage," while another writer calls European Sundays, "alcoholiholidays." As an example of displacement take the following story: two Jewish gentlemen met near a bathing establishment. "Have you taken a bath?" asked the first. "How is that? Is one missing?" replied the other. Here the displacement of the

emphasis from the word "bath" to the word "taken" and the double meaning of the latter constitute the main element of this joke; besides, this joke refers also to two characteristic traits frequently attributed to European members of the Jewish people. Secondary elaboration present in wit is of a somewhat different nature from that in dreams, due to linguistic limitations. The questions: Why do we invent jokes and why do we laugh at them? Freud answers thus: wit is a shortcut to freedom from many restrictions. He says that children discover at an early age that they can do many otherwise forbidden things if they succeed in making their parents or teachers laugh, for a smiling person need no longer be feared as a disciplinarian. So in jest we may say many truths which otherwise would be resented by our hearers, as is obvious in the case of comedies.

The chief difference between dreams and wit lies in the fact that the dreams are private, while wit is a social affair which depends for its quality and effectiveness upon the audience. A joke about Christian Science amongst Christian Science adherents would certainly fall flat, to say the least. Some forms of wit appeal to one sex more than to the other. Wit must also make some demands upon our intelligence: for instance, puns are scorned by many people because that is the earliest form of wit among children. The higher the intelligence of the hearers, the more subtle must be the wit-mechanism. A mind of the strictly logical kind will enjoy wit based on faulty logic. In wit, as in dreams, the sex urge and the ego urge are predominant and trying to escape the censorship of the safety urge; in other words, there is always a dangerous element in witticisms. The ego urge usually manifests itself in being aggressive and disparaging some opponent or some object of which we are really afraid or which we ought to respect. The burlesque always has its fling at some pompous personage, presenting him in some undignified or ridiculous situation. Finally, wit may use also the same kinds of symbols as dreams.

Errors of the tongue, of the pen, lapses of memory, and other erroneous actions of everyday life are also manifestations of sub-conscious tendencies and strivings to evade the Censor and find

satisfaction in conscious expressions. According to Freud we forget names only when they have some unpleasant subconscious connotation, when they touch some painful emotional complex of repression. We forget easily the names of people bearing our own name, because our ego feels a certain loss of power when someone else assumes the most important element of our own personality, namely our name. Again, we sometimes feel a subconscious hostility toward a certain person not because of anything inimical in himself, but because of his resemblance to some other disliked person. We sometimes confess to an unexplainable dislike for a person who to all appearances is most amiable; we say "there is something about him which I don't like," which on closer examination may turn out to be some trifling matter like a certain mannerism, or the color of his hair, the sound of his voice, and the like, which in itself is not disliked but which is very similar to the same element in another person who is very much disliked for some entirely different reason.

Slips of the tongue are either a form of wish-fulfilment or a revelation of some subconscious and suppressed complex. They often show the process of condensation, as in the following case. Somebody tried to recite the couplet

"The ape he is a funny sight
When in the apple he takes a bite"

and began by saying: "The apel is a funny sight." A secret wish is revealed in the following slip of the tongue: a physician was asked whether he could benefit a certain patient by psycho-analytic treatment and responded that he thought he could in time remove all symptoms because it seemed to him a durable case, meaning of course "curable." Speech blunders are not unknown in literature and are used for the very same reasons as those of everyday life. Freud quotes an example from the Merchant of Venice. Portia, it will be remembered, was bound by the will of her father to select a husband through a lottery. By a lucky chance she had escaped all distasteful suitors; but when Bassanio appears she is afraid that he, too, will draw the unlucky lottery. She dare not tell him her feelings, but Shake-

spear reveals her inner conflict in letting her make the following mistake:

“one half of me is yours,
The other half yours—Mine own, I would say.”

Similar in nature are the errors in reading: for example, the statement in a letter “Poor Dr. W. H. will not recover from his illness” was misread “Poor Mrs. W. H. will not recover,” because a lady with the same initials had the same disease. Errors of the pen are either errors of omission or of condensation. For instance, a politician had sent a eulogy to a newspaper in which occurred the following error: “Fortunately for Connecticut, J—— H—— is no longer a member of Congress.” The writer made much ado about the printer’s error, but when the original letter was examined it was found that the writer himself had made the error. Again the ego urge and the sex urge are involved in many errors of this kind. The most frequent kinds of erroneous actions of everyday life are such as mislaying or losing objects, forgetting to do something for some one else, calling persons by wrong names, especially married ladies by their maiden names, leaving keys in the door, losing a member of a pair of articles of wear, and others. Here again Freud maintains that our suppressed or subconscious tendencies try to affirm their existence or to evade the censorship by seeking outlets into consciousness in these disguised forms. Works of art and literature are likewise interpreted as compensations for the repression of all those impulses that civilization, education, society, morality, in short, the Censor or safety urge, decree as undesirable.

Whether psychology will ultimately come to agree with Freud’s interpretation of all these experiences and accept his theory of the subconscious springs and currents of mental life is impossible to predict. On the one hand his work and system has been subjected to many sharp and just criticisms, and on the other hand he has found many ardent supporters in every country. The chief merit of his whole work lies in the fact that he has called attention to the most neglected aspect of our mental life and has developed a number of methods of approaching the

subconscious. As soon as the difficulty of unverifiable and subjective interpretation can be overcome or eliminated from his work, it will be possible to subject his theory to the only reliable test of scientific research, objective observation and experiment. Until then psychologists will do best to suspend judgment regarding the scientific value of Freudian psycho-analysis.



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